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New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

The President: Before I start the day's proceedings, let me again plead for the cooperation and support of the General Assembly in terms of the use of cellular phones. Please ensure that they are at least set to vibrate when you are in the Hall, because it is very disturbing to speakers — persons who have travelled thousands of miles to be with us to make a statement — who are disrupted as a result of the ringing of telephones. Please do your best to see how you can assist in this particular matter.

Address by Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Drnovšek *(spoke in Slovenian; interpretation provided by the delegation)*: The United Nations is a great and good idea, born of human suffering and the universal desire for a better world. Despite the many difficult challenges it has faced throughout more than half a century of its history, it has always had an important role to play. It has succeeded because it has been able to adapt and because, on meeting new obstacles, it has found a modus operandi to achieve its objectives, although not always to the desired extent. Particularly worthy of mention are its achievements in peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and the development of international law and the universal values that international law upholds.

The role that the United Nations has played to date is clear proof of the fact that not every issue facing the international community can be resolved unilaterally, or even bilaterally. In a time of growing global interdependence there are more and more problems that countries cannot solve alone, or even in cooperation with a smaller number of other countries. The multilateralism of the United Nations must therefore not be built on values that promote the short-term benefit of individual countries or interest groups. Instead, it must be grounded in the awareness that no one can be satisfied in the long term if we are surrounded by people living in destitution and without even the basic necessities of human dignity. Values grounded in that awareness must become an inseparable component of relations between countries as the global interdependence of the human race increases.

That increasing global interdependence is also evidenced in the sphere of security, the most fundamental pillar of human welfare. Economic, inter-ethnic and religious tensions are no longer limited to single States or regions, but can now have potentially

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global effects. The most drastic warning of that became clear in the terrorist attacks on the United States. The Iraqi crisis and other areas in turmoil offer further warnings in that respect. There is no doubt that we can only effectively fight international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through the broad cooperation of many countries. The United Nations played a central role in building an international coalition against terrorism, and it must continue to play that role.

As we fight against the universal evil of terrorism, we must ensure that our eyes remain focused on upholding the great gains of our civilization. Human rights take pride of place among those achievements. Sometimes we cannot avoid the Hobbesian dilemma between security and freedom. Still, we must be aware that the sacrifice of freedom for security frequently results in achieving neither. We must therefore ensure that international commitments to respect human rights are upheld.

The international community has taken an important step in the protection of human rights with the creation of the International Criminal Court. It is our sincere hope that the most serious crimes against humanity will not go unpunished and that the Court will succeed in putting an end to such crimes through its independent operation.

Over the past year, the international community's focus has been on Iraq. At first the course of events with regard to Iraq revealed the limitations of multilateral cooperation and decision-making. Those events now illustrate the limits of engaging unilaterally, given the immense challenges in the area of international security and the inherent limits of unilateralism itself. The complexity of the post-conflict reconstruction and revitalization of Iraq demands the widest possible support from the international community and Iraqis themselves. The United Nations is the only body capable of serving as the embodiment of such support. Its role in Iraq must become more active while retaining its autonomy. Only a strong United Nations with a broadly defined mandate will be able to fulfil the role we require of it, namely, to serve as a factor for stability in Iraq and in the entire region. Performing that role would be the best means of paying tribute to the representatives of the United Nations who tragically lost their lives in Iraq, including Sergio Vieira de Mello and his colleagues. They will live on in our memories as well as in our actions.

We should not allow the focus on the most visible crises and on the fight against terrorism to lead to the neglect of other dangers to global peace and security. A single example of that would be the areas of Africa that require assistance in both ending conflicts and tackling the root causes of such unrest. Even Afghanistan, where so recently all eyes were focused, has faded from our minds. Yet there is a clear danger that the chronic instability of that country could revert to devastating civil war. Nor can we neglect the region of South-Eastern Europe, which posed one of the most serious threats to global peace and security throughout the 1990s. South-Eastern Europe is now peaceful. However, the success or failure of its post-conflict stabilization is still dependent on the active involvement of the international community. We must therefore devote sufficient attention to political and social consolidation in that region.

The world cannot respond to the Iraqi crisis by reducing that issue to one of military security, or even by engaging in the increasing militarization of international security. We must focus on the source of threats to international security. We must work hard towards responsible and sound development that does not widen the gap between rich and poor. We must move beyond a developmental pattern that worsens differences and tensions. Instead we have to ensure sound prospects for all, including those in the so-called third world. In the same vein, we must have international trade rules that enable less developed countries to use their resources to the maximum benefit. The collapse of negotiations in Cancún should be taken seriously. Developed countries should respond by accepting more of the requirements put forward by developing countries. The Millennium Declaration and its Millennium Development Goals are an important response to those challenges. We must therefore contribute what we can to achieving those objectives.

I would like, at this point, to make special mention of the fight against HIV/AIDS. I warmly welcome the special session of the General Assembly dedicated to that issue.

The objective increase in global interdependence requires a strengthened role for the global Organization. To that end, we must revitalize the United Nations and adapt it to meet new challenges. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has accomplished a great deal thus far in the area of rationalizing United Nations operations and increasing efficiency. We

congratulate him on those achievements and will support him in his continued efforts to that end. We also welcome wholeheartedly his intention to establish a high-level panel of eminent persons to look at current challenges to peace and security and to review the functioning of the major bodies of the United Nations with a view to recommending ways of strengthening the Organization.

A number of questions and proposals relating to the revitalization and reform of the General Assembly have already been identified, and they have the support of the majority of Member States, including Slovenia. They now need to be put into practice. Let me also reaffirm Slovenia's belief that the Security Council must be enlarged to include representation for the countries that have the most responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. At the same time, there must be adequate representation for the rest of the international community in order to give the Council a satisfactory level of legitimacy.

Putting aside the changes required in the functioning of the United Nations, it should be pointed out that many misconceptions about the United Nations stem from a lack of information about the Organization. On the basis of the experience it has gained to date, the United Nations may do well to consider expanding its own global network of universities. Such institutions would be subordinate to national legislation and would offer a high quality education in the spirit of the United Nations. Such a policy would have numerous benefits. Students would learn a great deal about the United Nations, while the United Nations would be contributing to increasing the level of education, as well as disseminating its core values.

Globalization has opened our eyes to the vital realization that the whole human race is interdependent in its very essence. We must respond to the new challenges of globalization by strengthening our efforts to ensure that the values that the United Nations has done so much to develop are also globalized: international peace and security, respect for human rights, solidarity and environmental protection. The United Nations must continue to play a leading role in that all-important process. To that end, it is our responsibility to make the United Nations capable of enacting those values — and hence its admirable purpose — thereby making the world a better place in which to live.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Slovenia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Janez Drnovšek, President of the Republic of Slovenia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Honduras.

Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Maduro Joest (*spoke in Spanish*): This is the first time that I come the house of the peoples of the United Nations. This is also a crucial time in history, as it is for the Organization. A few years ago, the international community met in this Hall to restructure the agenda for the new millennium. We placed pressing issues and commonalities on that agenda, as well as the vision and goals necessary to guide our work. In fact, that agenda became our guide to ensure international peace and security, democratic governance and the joining of efforts to combat the most serious scourges afflicting the peoples of the world. That notwithstanding, a condemnable terrorist attack changed the course of our common agenda and forced all nations of the world to make adjustments to the priorities that had been set. Security then became the key, most pressing and compelling focus of collective action.

Honduras rejects and condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, regardless of where it takes place and regardless of its material and intellectual authors. In that regard, our Organization, wherein reside the hopes and desires of all the peoples of the world, also suffered the backlash of that new threat that sows terror and suffering. From this rostrum, I wish to pay tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello, a victim of injustice and fratricidal hatred.

Aware of our responsibilities as a member of the United Nations, Honduras and the Government over which I preside have fully assumed their commitment to the challenges before us. It is for that reason that Honduras today is party to a greater number of international conventions aimed at guaranteeing the security of the inhabitants of the planet. Despite our modest resources, we have responded to Security Council resolutions by sending a clearly humanitarian mission, comprised of a contingent from the Honduran armed forces, to Iraq in order to contribute to the reconstruction, stability and democratization of a friendly people. In the same spirit, Honduras has renewed its commitment to the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

In addition, along with our sister republics in Central America, we have worked arduously to develop a plan to prevent and combat terrorism, as well as a plan to fight organized crime in all its manifestations. I have also proposed to the heads of State and Government of Central America timely initiatives to increase the exchange of information and to establish a regional regime for arrests that will keep criminals from enjoying impunity simply by crossing the borders of Central America. I am also pleased to report that we Central Americans have moved forward with an agenda to ensure adequate limits and a balance in weapons. That will make it possible for us to invest the resources freed up in priority social areas.

We have done all of that without forgetting or setting aside the extraordinary declaration of solidarity and commitment that we have all undertaken to eradicate poverty and hunger. Our commitment and focused efforts have been appropriately reflected in the *Human Development Report*, which was recently presented in the Latin American and Caribbean region by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). My Government and people were extremely honoured to have been selected as the site of that presentation. It is clear from the UNDP report that, compared to averages in other countries, Honduras has been able to considerably reduce inequality vis-à-vis its economic growth. In other words, although relatively low, economic growth in Honduras during the reporting period was rather equitable. We have also made very significant progress in social spheres and in the area of institutional reform, and we have benefited from the support of the United Nations in that regard.

We would like to express our gratitude for our access to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which has made it possible to considerably increase our focus on those diseases to historical levels.

Again with the support of the Organization, we have greatly expanded our school lunch programme. In just 20 months, from an initial figure of 16 per cent, we have succeeded in reaching 80 per cent of the children who were going to school hungry. That programme is being carried out with the support of the World Food Programme (WFP). It also serves as a model for a WFP programme that purchases ingredients for town mayors and mothers of families that are then used to distribute prepared meals. Meal costs in that programme amount to $.09 per meal, which means that it costs $18 to feed a child during 200 school days.

We have also achieved considerable progress in the area of institutional reform, thanks to an agreement signed during the last electoral process by all political parties in Honduras, under the aegis of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office in Honduras. At the centre of that agreement is the fact that an independent superior court of justice has been established. In addition, the main State monitoring body is now more independent, electoral bodies are being made more professional and other reforms of great importance for democracy are being carried out to strengthen the trust of citizens in their institutions.

The UNDP has also been involved in our programme to reduce corruption. We have established an aggressive programme to delegate much of the State's procurement to UNDP and other non-governmental organizations in order to ensure honesty and avoid the temptation of corruption.

My Government has therefore come to this world forum with facts testifying to our desire to follow through with our commitments to reduce inequality and exclusion. However, Honduras is also here in the hope that the slow pace of human development in the world can, because it must, be overcome with increased and heightened international solidarity. I therefore appeal that the opportunities and benefits of globalization be made more equitable and just for all peoples and nations.

In that regard, I should like to refer to the Organization. The United Nations must increasingly be the meeting place for cultures and civilizations. Common effort is essential to achieve the purposes we agreed upon in San Francisco, and which we enshrined

in the Charter. We need a more efficient Organization to meet the challenges faced by peoples and to be able to channel our differences towards the peaceful causes we have agreed upon.

Undoubtedly, there are pressing situations that require our attention. The situation in the Middle East is of great concern to us. As in other countries, people whose ancestors came from that part of the world live peacefully in our country. They, along with all Hondurans, want peace to be a reality for the Palestinian and Jewish peoples, as well as for others in the region. Hanging by a thread, peace in the Middle East is precarious. It is our clear duty to strengthen that peace.

We are also concerned by clashes on the African continent and by the hotbeds of tension that occasionally flare up in Asia, whose consequences, were they to develop further, could jeopardize the entire world.

Good sense must always prevail. It is for that reason that we look forward to promising results from the negotiating table. Peace in the world is our peace. We are therefore committed to respecting and promoting human rights. While respecting human rights, Honduras is also committed to combating the various scourges besetting our societies.

Today in Honduras we have a very serious problem with juvenile crime, which has reached alarming levels that affect all of our citizens. In that regard, I would like to highlight one aspect of that violence. A number of years ago, criminal activity led to the tragic deaths of a number of young people under the age of 18. Given that tragic situation, my Government established a presidential commission for the physical and moral protection of young people. It also ordered an investigation of this phenomenon whose results were published in September 2002. In addition, we have set up a special unit to investigate the death of minors, which ensures that such reprehensible crimes are punished. In that connection, Honduras has adopted the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of the Commission on Human Rights, which has already begun to produce very positive results.

The time is ripe to categorically reiterate that the State of Honduras does not in any way tolerate, accept or promote the killing of children and young people. We have committed a considerable amount of our limited resources to mitigate, and if possible eradicate, this affront to human dignity. It is inconceivable for a violent minority to take hostage and threaten the peaceful and honest majority. Organized civil society is working on behalf of the majority of Hondurans in that effort, and together we are succeeding in reducing the level of crime in its various forms.

In order to deal with that evil — which is closely related to other forms of international crime, such as drug trafficking and terrorism, whose causes extend far beyond my homeland — my Government requires understanding and brotherly support from the international community. We also require that understanding and support in order that we can reach satisfactory agreements with the International Monetary Fund, thereby making possible the comprehensive implementation of the Stockholm Agenda for the Reconstruction and Transformation of Central America. Foreign debt relief must not continue to be mere words; it must become a reality. With the resources freed up by debt relief, my Government and the Governments to follow will have on hand extremely valuable capital to continue to combat poverty, illiteracy and HIV/AIDS and to meet other goals of the Millennium agenda.

Cooperation and solidarity is an obligation, not charity. It is an assumed commitment. Honduras hopes that greater and immediate efforts will be made so that the percentages agreed upon for cooperation will become a reality. We also recognize the fact that globalization, and specifically with regard to increased international trade, holds out the promise of growth for our peoples. We are involved in negotiating a free trade agreement with the United States and Canada, and will do the same with the European Union and others next year. However, we would ask more developed countries to allow our products access to their markets, which now benefit from outdated protection schemes.

We also ask for the elimination of agricultural subsidies, as well as for better benefits for our producers, who today receive only a minimal part of the value of the fruits of their labour. I would like to refer to the case of coffee as an example of the lack of equity in the added value of basic goods from our region. The recent crisis in the price of coffee beans has led to the unemployment of 600,000 persons in Central America. Over 80,000 small producers, most of whom are poor people from rural regions, carry out coffee production in Honduras. That is an enormous advantage during times when prices are good, because it provides a very efficient mechanism for the social

distribution of income. However, the contrary is true now that prices are at historical lows.

Six years ago, in 1997, it was estimated that the total value of the retail coffee market was $30 billion. Forty per cent of that amount, which is to say, $12 billion, was returned to producers. Today that market price has more than doubled, to $65 billion. However, producers are now getting less than half of what they had been getting, namely, $5.5 billion; which means that only 9 per cent of the final market value goes to producers. I wish to reiterate that it is essential that we redistribute the benefits of globalization and that we increase solidarity.

That situation is not limited to just one of our export products. The actual terms of trade for our main export products conspire against democratic governance, but the Honduran people require, as I have said, clear actions to redistribute the benefits of globalization and increase levels of solidarity.

International peace and security require all our efforts. The attitude adopted on conflicts is very important. Hence, Honduras is taking part in two cases before the International Court of Justice. In both cases, Honduras has come forward in peace to seek justice. We are certain that in the case of El Salvador, there will be a positive outcome to the 1992 ruling of the Court. In the case of Nicaragua, we are also certain that the definition the International Court adopts regarding our respective maritime claims will be fully respected. Honduras has always faithfully and strictly complied with international rulings. Rest assured, Sir, of our firm determination to respect in both these cases the decisions of the International Court of Justice.

I cannot leave this rostrum of universal conscience without expressing my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election and wishing you every success in your sensitive tasks.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Honduras for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Maduro Joest, President of the Republic of Honduras, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Aristide (*spoke in French*): It is my honour to greet the President on behalf of the people of Haiti, and I congratulate our dear friend and brother Mr. Julian Hunte, President of this session of the General Assembly.

After having celebrated in 1992 500 years of Indian, black and popular resistance, the Republic of Haiti will celebrate on 1 January 2004 the bicentennial anniversary of its independence. From this moment on, the first black republic of the world most warmly welcomes you to that celebration of freedom. A universal value, that freedom, won in 1804 by our ancestors, must direct us, day and night, towards peace.

Because of the genocide inflicted first on the Indians, then on 15 million Africans, wrested from their native land and thrown in chains of slavery onto the soil of Haiti in 1502, there could be no peace. During those three centuries of genocide, our continent provided 70 per cent of the entire world's gold, or 2,849 tons of gold, valued at $36 billion.

Of course, slavery is a crime against humanity. It is therefore the binding obligation of our generation to enshrine in the museum of civilization the gold book dedicated to reparation and restitution.

Yesterday there was trafficking in blacks. Tomorrow will be the celebration of blacks — of blacks who are free and free forever so that peace will finally reign.

Therefore, 1 January 2004, will be a celebration for all freedom-loving blacks and whites; a celebration and a holiday for all peoples who thirst for freedom and peace. Thus, we wish to proceed from this bicentennial of freedom to achieve a millennium of peace.

In that context, the Republic of Haiti is aiming at sustainable development, to make it possible to achieve the Millennium Development Goals adopted here in 2000 by the world's heads of State and Government. The reduction by half, by 2015, of the percentage of the world's population whose income is less than one dollar a day is indeed an enormous challenge. Yes, it is an enormous challenge to be met, given the acceleration of economic globalization.

In this vast space of freedom, where, unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to break the chains of abject poverty, four fifths of the world's inhabitants are users of only one fifth of the planet's entire resources. While global production of basic food products represents 110 per cent of global needs, 30 million people die of hunger every year. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Haiti, the exercise of power entails respect for fundamental freedoms, tolerance and good governance; a war on the evils of corruption, drug trafficking and impunity; investment in human beings, security for all, and the holding of free, honest and democratic elections.

For the birth of a new Haiti and the advent of a better world, we are opposed to the extinction of freedom, as well as to that of our species and ecosystems. In the Caribbean and in Latin America, the deterioration of the environment is affecting 300 million hectares of land and nearly 30 per cent of coral reefs. Over the past three decades, of 400 million hectares of natural forest that have perished throughout the world, 40 per cent are in the Caribbean and Latin American regions. It goes without saying that the poorest segment of our peoples consequently suffer, and their suffering is our pain.

While scientists at the Stockholm summit emphasized the extermination of 150 species of birds and the threat of extinction of 1,000 others, the burning issue today focuses on life or the gradual extinction of the human species. That is demonstrated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There are 42 million infected persons throughout the world; 3.1 million deaths; 13 million orphans whose parents have been decimated by the virus; and 6,000 young people who are infected with HIV every day.

The attempt to effectively combat this pandemic means opting inevitably for the eradication of poverty. The First Lady of the Republic has written that the burden of the foreign debt and economic sanctions are obviously not paving the way for such eradication.

Indeed, in the Caribbean and in Latin America, the foreign debt entails an average net transfer of 25 billion dollars annually to the North. In other words, the aggregate value of that debt exceeds half of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the region.

Throughout this collective and historic march towards the Millennium Goals, we hope that the contribution of the rich countries to sustainable development will rise from 0.2 to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP).

Numerous observers have expressed their gratification at observing the reduction in global military spending on a worldwide scale during the last decade of the twentieth century. From 1985 to 1998, those expenditures declined from 1,210.5 billion to 803.7 billion dollars. The drop in military spending and the rise in spending for human development will, we believe, promote both human and economic growth. The Republic of Haiti will continue, unceasingly, to fight against violence and terrorism. It hopes, however, that this uncontrollable need will not lead to stepping up an arms race or the proliferation of deadly weapons throughout the world.

Terrorism and bio-terrorism are by no means mere hallucinations. To live in freedom and to live in peace there is a need to eradicate violence wherever it may come from. May we finally see the dawn of an era of peace in the Middle East, in Afghanistan, in Africa, in Asia and in Iraq, wherever wars are inflicting untold suffering on mankind. Since 1989, the end of the cold war, there have been more than 60 armed conflicts claiming the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals and creating more than 17 million refugees.

Violence and slavery are sources of darkness. Peace and freedom are sources of light. Our world is seeking that light. That light, like freedom, is absolutely indispensable for life on earth. Impoverished, but aware of its human, cultural and historic riches, Haiti shines beyond the darkness of colonization like a beacon of freedom.

Let us humbly say:

The first black republic of the world

Is and continues to be the geographical axis of freedom for blacks.

(*Spoke in Haitian Creole*)

Haiti is the mother of liberty,

Her sons and daughters are the fruits of human dignity.

(*Spoke in French*)

Haiti is the mother of liberty,

Her sons and daughters are the fruits of human dignity.

May it shine, may it shine day and night, that light of freedom! Thanks to Albert Einstein, we know that light is made up of particles and therefore implies a flow of photons. Thanks to Toussaint Louverture, we know that liberty is a radiant source of light, giving off photons of dignity, justice and peace. May the blazing light of liberty shine throughout the world.

Our ancestors and your ancestors freed the slaves from their chains. Today, let us unite to free the world from the chains of inhuman poverty. Then we shall see a reign of happiness, justice and peace at the heart of all nations and in Haiti, where you will be all warmly welcomed to celebrate the bicentennial of our independence.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank Mr. Jean Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement just made.

Mr. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, President of the Republic of Haiti was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Fall (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Her Excellency Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President *(spoke in French)*: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, and I invite her to address the Assembly.

President Macapagal-Arroyo: On behalf of the Philippine delegation I would like to extend warmest congratulations to the President and the members of the Bureau on his election to the leadership of the fifty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The past twelve months have been a most difficult and challenging period for the United Nations. A community of cynicism has formed regarding the ability of the United Nations to rise above the morass of disunity and disruptive competition among major Powers to fulfil its catalytic role in promoting international peace and security and development.

But, while it is undeniable that the United Nations has struggled over the past twelve months, its predicted decline is greatly exaggerated. Economic linkages among nations have widened and deepened in many sectors. The interconnectedness of the global village continues to infringe upon traditional political boundaries. For instance, the tentacles of international terrorism have spread insidiously all over.

These and current developments have displayed that without the centripetal pull provided by international cooperation and partnership through the United Nations, the world would tend to drift apart. The rich would become richer and the poor poorer. Conflict and disharmony would erupt along political, ethnic and even religious fissures. We face the paradox of a world contracting through advancing technology and, at the same time, drifting apart along the seams of inequality.

Three years ago, 146 heads of State and Government and 189 Member States blazed the trail to the future by crafting the Millennium Declaration. In the three years since the millennium started, in the three years since the Millennium Summit, much has been done, though much remains to be accomplished to achieve the goals that the United Nations set for the twenty-first century.

I am pleased to report that the vision of the Millennium Summit and pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals in my country have begun to bear fruit, as they have been applied in our peace process for the southern Philippines, in Mindanao.

The Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Muslim separatist group in the southern Philippines, realize that the prescription of the United Nations is the only correct and viable one: that peace is an indispensable condition for

economic development, just as development is an essential component of peace. Nothing will do more to lift the Philippines out of poverty than peace itself. That is why we are negotiating peace with the MILF. The Government of Malaysia has been a prime mover in helping us negotiate peace, and I thank them.

To complement these efforts, the Philippines has launched its bid for observer status in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). I will be attending the OIC conference next month in Malaysia and hope to use that time to advance the peace process in Mindanao and advance understanding among all faiths.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations community for its support for the Philippines as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2004-2005, and to ask for your continued support during the elections to the Council.

We wish to contribute our long experience in the United Nations system, as an original founding Member of the Organization. We have actively participated in the Council's initiatives towards the preservation of global peace and security throughout the past six decades, both as a past non-permanent member and as a contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations and other Council activities.

The Philippines has actively contributed military and police personnel to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Middle East and Europe over the past half-century. We are now preparing to contribute a contingent to join the latest United Nations operation, the deployment to Liberia next month.

Our guiding principles for our Council participation include the following. The principle of collective security established under the Charter should be observed. The Security Council should maintain and pursue a multilateral approach towards the performance of its primary role of maintaining international peace and security. Observance of the rule of law is of paramount importance in the maintenance of international peace and security.

I believe that there is a strong role for the United Nations to play in Iraq and welcome and encourage United Nations involvement to share the burden with other nations, like the Philippines, that are already participating in the reconstruction of Iraq.

It is heartening that we adopted an important resolution on conflict prevention at the last session of the General Assembly. As long as conflicts occur, there is a need to strengthen our capacities for peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-building.

International security, which in recent experience is mostly threatened by imploding and failed States, must be animated by the need to protect individuals and communities from violence. It has also been amply demonstrated that democracy is the condition most conducive to a flourishing rule of law.

Erecting mechanisms and infrastructure for the rule of law should be included as a key part of any exit strategy of United Nations peace operations. It is our view that the Security Council should provide the leadership in moving the United Nations to a stronger commitment to the rule of law in areas where the United Nations is conducting peace operations.

Meanwhile, the challenges posed by the global threat of terrorism are being effectively addressed through growing international coordination and cooperation, particularly in the exchange of information, best practices and lessons learned.

We are actively assisting the work of the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee in fighting the spectre of global terrorism, and we are in the process of ratifying the important international conventions on terrorism. At the same time, I am working with other heads of State to ensure continued cooperation in our battle to rid South-East Asia of the threat of terrorism.

What is required of us today is to link up once more with the vision that our leaders charted at the Millennium Summit and other recent international conferences, and we should do this under the banner of the United Nations.

The United Nations was created 58 years ago to serve as the multilateral forum of the international community to join hands in confronting challenges. It is sobering to remember that no country, big or small, rich or poor, can feel safe or think that it can remain unaffected by violent conflicts, environmental degradation and human suffering. The United Nations must continue to adapt to changing conditions to fulfil its envisioned role, and we support the call of the Secretary-General for reforms in the structure of the United Nations.

The United Nations is a *sui generis* global institution that can play a catalytic role to confront all these challenges now and in the future. Therefore, it behoves every Member of this Organization to make the United Nations increasingly relevant and to invigorate it to become a modern, nimble and determined agent for change, which benefits mankind's condition.

We should instil the concept of strength and greatness, not in terms of the ability to achieve or maintain dominance over others, but in terms of the ability of nations to work with others in the interest of the international community as a whole.

We favour the strength of consensus in which the future of world peace, security and prosperity lie.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Philippines for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, President of the Republic of the Philippines, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minster and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Royal Highness Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata (Tonga): I congratulate you, Sir, upon your assumption of this high office. I also wish to extend my sincere gratitude to your worthy predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his dedicated and committed tenure as president.

I commend the resolute leadership of our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, during these challenging and uncertain times. It is a timely reminder of the dedication and commitment to the Charter required of us all as Member States.

Tonga wishes to extend its deepest sympathy and condolences to the Secretary-General, the Organization and all affected delegations for the tragic loss of life in the attacks of 19 August and this past week on the United Nations compound in Baghdad. We recall the courage of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and too many others before him, who have fallen in the line of duty while embodying the United Nations commitment to, and ultimate sacrifice for, a peaceful and better world. For its part, my Government will carefully study and examine the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Attacks such as that of 11 September 2001 and those that befell the United Nations compound in Baghdad will continue to serve as stirring reminders to us all of the need for ever present vigilance and strength to combat terrorism.

Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) continues to be the beacon that guides the activities of my Government to develop and enhance appropriate measures in order to strengthen our compliance. Tonga continues to support the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and has, to date, submitted all the necessary country reports requested of it. I am grateful to the CTC and the Security Council for their patience.

After careful study of the United Nations conventions on terrorism, Tonga is now a party to all 12 instruments, but merely becoming parties to these instruments will not suffice. Concrete steps will continue to be needed for small countries like mine to fully and meaningfully implement those obligations. We have strengthened our legislative framework and taken other measures in order to give domestic effect to such obligations. We continue to participate in national and regional activities designed to assist countries such as Tonga implement viable counter-terrorism measures. The ongoing assistance of our traditional development partners and other organizations such as the Commonwealth and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat have been a boon in this regard.

Last year, I referred to the signposts that line the developmental path: the Millennium Summit, Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg. Together with the

outcomes of other United Nations summit and conferences, they have inspired hope and vision for our collective developmental aspirations. While recent events in Cancun might not be encouraging, they have served to emphasize that implementing those signposts will be critical and decisive.

That is a timely reminder, as small island developing States (SIDS) proceed towards implementing chapter VII of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. That chapter refers specifically, among other things, to the ten-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action that is to take place in Mauritius in 2004.

Indeed, Sir, under your presidency in particular, Tonga hopes that this is one signpost that will give further impetus to the achievements in Johannesburg last year, as well as to the national efforts and endeavours of SIDS in achieving sustainable development. We will continue to refine our priority and capacity needs to take greater advantage of available financial and technological support. An example of that is our attempt to improve our air transport services and international aviation links to combat what has been described as "the tyranny of distance" in our region, by becoming the most recent party to the Multilateral Agreement on the Liberalization of International Air Transport.

Regional activities which bear upon our sustainable development efforts include the Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PALM) Summit 2003 between Pacific Islands Forum member States, including Tonga, and Japan, where mutual developmental issues are discussed and considered. I commend Japan for its ongoing commitment to Tonga and the region through that process, and I look forward to the fruitful results of the Okinawa Initiative.

I also commend the initiative and recent visit to the Pacific this year of President Chirac of France. It was an encouraging sign and created a solid foundation for further dialogue and future partnership on developmental issues. I look forward to participating in the next summit meeting in Paris.

As a developing ocean State, we remain interested in ongoing developments in oceans affairs and the law of the sea. As I have mentioned earlier, Tonga has become party to all United Nations conventions on terrorism including those that are maritime-related.

We continue to value the work and decisions this year of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the International Seabed Authority and the work and role of the United Nations Informal Consultative Process at its fourth meeting.

I am pleased that the second informal meeting of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement recently resulted in a framework to enable the concrete implementation of Part VII of the Agreement with particular attention to small island developing States and their aspirations for fisheries. In that respect, we urge other Member States to become a party to that important Agreement

As emphasized during the special high-level meeting on Monday, 22 September, HIV/AIDS remains a devastating developmental and public health challenge for us all, particularly for small and remote island communities. Tonga welcomes the work of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the funding it has recently approved to assist Tonga and other countries in the region. That complements our own national strategies and programmes to combat those scourges.

Earlier this year, my Government took the necessary legislative, administrative and preventive measures to protect against the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). I commend the untiring work of the World Health Organization (WHO) in its committed efforts to address and combat that public health threat. I also commend the recent adoption by the WHO Assembly of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which, as of yesterday, has Tonga as one of its signatories.

I was pleased to have been requested by the Government of the Solomon Islands and by other PIF Foreign Ministers to contribute Tongan troops and police personnel to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to restore law and order. RAMSI has enabled the Government to address urgent and varied concerns such as formulating new measures to deal with the enormous economic and developmental challenges they now face.

That endeavour, endorsed by the 16 Pacific Islands Forum member States, is testament to what can be done by a region to bring about peace in its part of the world. Each Pacific Islands Forum member State has contributed to RAMSI in accordance with its own capacity. Taken together with Australian and New Zealand resources and command, it is producing

pleasing results. It is not the first such regional effort in the field of security. Small might too readily be considered by some to be beautiful, but we, too, play our role in many fields of cooperation.

Tonga continues to fully support the work of the Security Council and the call for the full implementation of its resolutions to ensure lasting peace in arenas of conflict. In the Middle East, the peaceful and lasting coexistence of two States living side by side within secure and recognized borders will continue to be elusive until the cycle of violence ends and there is a return to constructive dialogue.

Iraq is a sharp backdrop for the United Nations. One of the lessons of 11 September 2001 and Iraq is not just that our Organization is in need of reform but that reform is urgently and desperately required. As I stated in my Millennium General Assembly address three years ago, the Security Council needs reform. Otherwise we shall be dealing with today's realities by means of mechanisms of yesteryear. I continue to support the call for reforming the Council by expanding the number of permanent and non-permanent members. In like terms, I support the call of the Assembly President for a proactive and action-oriented General Assembly. Let us hope that between this session of the General Assembly and the next, something concrete emerges.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga for the statement he has just made.

Prince 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, MP, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The Honourable Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Wickremesinghe (Sri Lanka): Allow me to extend my congratulations to the President on his unanimous and well-deserved election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. This is a difficult period for any person to preside over the General Assembly, and I wish him every success. I also wish to thank Mr. Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic for his exemplary work as the outgoing President.

Last year, while addressing the General Assembly, I referred to the commencement of the peace process in Sri Lanka and promised to report on its progress. Progress in the peace process in Sri Lanka is due to the fact that we stopped talking about talking to each other and actually began to talk. We have been lucky, because the international community did not simply talk about helping us, it actually did so.

In moving from conflict to peace in Sri Lanka we initiated fundamental change in policy and strategy. We shifted from confrontation to negotiation, identifying and recognizing the root causes of the conflict. The success story that Sri Lanka is fast becoming also demonstrates the value of the support of the international community acting in concert. That the global community, moving with a common purpose, can succeed in re-establishing peace, democracy and prosperity has been amply demonstrated in the Sri Lankan experience. After 20 years of conflict, our people are now enjoying the fruits of 20 months of peace.

The role of the international community in enabling us to move from war to peace has been outstanding. The facilitation provided by Norway has had the result of bringing the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) together in several rounds of negotiation. President Chandrika Kumaratunga's continuing declaration of commitment to a political solution has been invaluable. The moral and material support that our other frontline sponsors — India, the European Union, Japan, Canada and the United States, along with the multilateral institutions of the United Nations and the rest of the international community — have given, and continue to give to us, has guaranteed that our efforts to consolidate and maintain the peace will strengthen and develop.

Last November at Oslo, our international partners endorsed and underwrote a paradigm shift in policy when the Government and the LTTE accepted that the

future political order in Sri Lanka would include moving towards a federal polity where the unity and territorial integrity of the country would be ensured. Again, in June of this year at Tokyo, 52 nations and 21 multilateral agencies, many of them of the United Nations system, pledged their support to Sri Lanka's peace efforts, rehabilitation and development programmes. The massive and unparalleled financial contributions alone totalled $4.5 billion over a four-year period. Those are indeed landmark events underlining the value and strength of international action.

I must, however, inform the Assembly that, like in all negotiations in a peace process, we find ourselves today at a temporary impasse in the talks. Within the next few weeks we should know the results of a comprehensive review undertaken by the LTTE in response to our earlier proposals regarding an interim administrative arrangement for the north and east of our country. That they should take so much time and effort can be seen as a positive sign. We in turn will look positively at the proposals put forward by the LTTE, and will do everything in our power to keep the peace process moving forward to a successful conclusion.

Meanwhile, our collective efforts, which have been handsomely supported by the international community and multilateral agencies, at providing relief, rehabilitation and development to the conflict-affected areas of the country are proceeding apace. Economic growth is marching ahead, from a growth rate of -1 per cent in the year 2001 to possibly 6 per cent this year. And tourism is booming.

That has thus far been the story of Sri Lanka. In the recent past there have indeed also been some success stories in the United Nations: in Haiti, Somalia, Angola, Kosovo and East Timor. But they are not enough.

The United Nations represents a unique concept for international order formulated by the Allied Powers to address challenges to peace and security and to development and democracy in the aftermath of the Second World War. President Roosevelt, in his 1943 Christmas Eve radio talk, said that as long as Britain, Russia, China and the United States stuck together in determination to keep the peace, there was no possibility of an aggressor nation arising to start another world war.

But the world that the United Nations is called upon to represent today is an immeasurably changed world. Today's problems, as the Secretary-General has reminded us, are problems that respect no borders and no laws. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental degradation, alienation and exclusion, conflict, global terrorism, disease and endemic poverty are foremost among those problems. Inescapably, the United Nations remains the central, indispensable forum in which we can collectively and democratically respond to the challenges that we face in common.

But the United Nations is under enormous stress. That strain comes from the structure of the Organization itself. As a result, the adequacy and effectiveness of the rules and instruments devised over 50 years ago to bring order and reason to the post-Second-World-War international scene are being questioned. The apparent irrelevance of the current multilateral rules and institutions to deal with the manifold problems of today compel our urgent attention. In the words of the Secretary-General, it challenges our ability "to deal with the least difficult issues and to do so effectively". Hence the rationale for reform — which is insistent, compelling and radical — cannot be averted; for words without action are meaningless, as we in Sri Lanka have learned at a bitter cost.

Take for example the profound issues surrounding Iraq. There are members in the Hall today who believe passionately that the United States and its allies were wrong to intervene in Iraq. Then there are those of us who feel that the United States and its allies had no choice but to intervene, that the failure of the United Nations had created the need for a world policeman, however reluctant it might be. But Iraq is more than a divergence of views on a major issue. It shows the inadequacies of the present collective security system, a decision-making system which grappled with the issue of Iraq for over a decade without a solution and created a deadlock at a most critical time.

The United Nations has already paid a dreadful price. The attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad not only deprived the world community of some of its most devoted and talented servants but raised to the fore issues relating to the mandates entrusted to the United Nations by its Member States. It represents, undoubtedly, a direct challenge — a challenge which must be met.

Any reform must be radical, so that in this changed world — so different from the one it was called upon to serve in 1945 — the United Nations can have the capacity to cope with war, poverty, human rights,

terrorism and a dramatically changed environment in which weapons of mass destruction have become so potent a symbol. We have to move beyond rhetoric and from cosmetic change to major surgery if we are to overcome the challenge ahead. Rhetoric is not a substitute for decisive action. Frantic activity is not a substitute for concerted action, and the adoption of resolutions does not make a tangible difference in the day-to-day lives of our peoples. Above all, let us recall that inaction in itself is a deliberate and a considered decision to do nothing. We should not rival the League of Nations' impotence on Abyssinia.

The problems we are encountering at the present time compel us courageously and resolutely to address and overcome the fundamental inadequacies that afflict our international institutions and processes.

This year has seen the propitious coming together of three events which have framed thus far the political, financial and economic ordering of our world. I refer to this session of the General Assembly, the gathering of the Finance Ministers at the Bretton Woods institutions, and the discussions at Cancún on the reordering of the world trade regime. At all three meetings, the call for structural reform was insistent and compelling. All three — the United Nations, the Bretton Woods Twins and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) — were born out of the trauma and dislocation of the Second World War. For over 50 years they have served our many causes in varying ways, at times with limited success, at times with despair at their inability to effectively deal with the fundamental problems of the day. After the Asian crisis, the Bretton Wood institutions came under close scrutiny, and today we are discussing how the developing countries can have greater say in their decision-making.

Recent experience under the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) process at Cancún further illustrates the problems that face us. No one expected an agreed formula to come out of Cancún. On the other hand, it need not have ended in collapse.

The Secretary-General's report has identified many of the defects of the system that need to be addressed. Other speakers, too, have made proposals in this regard. At this stage, I should like to mention that, in our view, any expansion of the Security Council as a result of reforms must involve a manageable number, and Asia must be given its due. This was ignored in 1945.

While many have urged a radical reform of the structure of the United Nations so as to make it able to respond to the challenges that confront multilateralism at the present time, most have been hesitant to suggest ideas that are both practical and doable. I believe that the time has come for all of us who accept in principle the value of this institution, the United Nations, and the objective it stands for to think out of the box — to think creatively, imaginatively and unconventionally.

If I were to hazard an approach, it would be along the lines of going back to our roots. The outline of the United Nations prepared at Dumbarton Oaks in August and September 1944 was agreed to at Yalta in February 1945 at the level of head of Government. The Charter was signed at the final meeting in San Francisco, in June 1945. All this was completed in just 10 months.

I, for one, would like to suggest that the Secretary-General and a carefully selected group of political leaders themselves come up with recommendations for United Nations reform. Their recommendations could be placed before a special session of the General Assembly, at which heads of State or Government would be present.

I suggest that the time frame for this need not be any longer than at the inception of the United Nations, 58 years ago.

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves that 11 September was a tragic wake-up call for all of us. The 19th of August was a tragic wake-up call for the United Nations.

We have before us a historic opportunity to build a United Nations worthy of the people whom we have the honour to represent — a United Nations where honesty is not clouded by diplomacy, where realism replaces rhetoric, and where action supplants treaties.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Address by The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa.

The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Malielegaoi (Samoa): Samoa warmly welcomes the well-deserved election of Mr. Julian Hunte, given his leadership in his region and among our community of small States. Let me also pay tribute to President Jan Kavan of the Czech Republic for his effective guidance during the fifty-seventh session.

Unprecedented events since we met last year have tested the very foundation of our Organization. There is therefore great urgency for our membership to declare anew our faith in the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We need to assert, both in commitment and in action, our support for fundamental human rights and the peaceful coexistence of nations.

The range of challenges that now confront the international community in our globalized and interdependent world require that nations be united in common endeavour. Only through cooperation and multilateral joint effort can we hope effectively to guarantee human rights and achieve peace and security, and social and economic justice, for all. Samoa therefore believes that the United Nations remains uniquely suited to the pursuit and coordination of global initiatives to attain these objectives.

To this end, Samoa firmly supports ongoing efforts to reform and modernize the United Nations. Substantive changes are required with regard to both the General Assembly and Security Council, as well as to other bodies of the United Nations system. We certainly support the expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council to include nations such as Germany and Japan.

Samoa adds its voice to the condemnation of the atrocious terrorist attack on United Nations offices in Baghdad last month, which took the lives of many United Nations personnel, including the esteemed High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello. On behalf of my Government and of the people of Samoa, I reiterate our very sincere condolences to the Secretary-General and the families of those who lost their lives or were injured in that terrible event.

Terrorism is an offence to humanity and goes against the core values of the United Nations. Terrorist activities around the world demand a continued and concerted international response. States must be determined in their national and collective efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms. I reaffirm the strong support of Samoa for the relevant Security Council resolutions against terrorism. Those resolutions provide a clear signal of our determination to suppress terrorist activities, including those related to training, international movement and financing. In this area, Samoa continues to align its domestic policies and legislation with the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, as well as to participate actively in the regional security measures undertaken in the Pacific region.

We commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his determination and efforts for the reconstruction of Iraq. We recognize the enormous complexities and obstacles of this task. But substantive commitment and work must continue in providing humanitarian assistance, as well as in restoring law and order. We also firmly believe that continued engagement in Iraq must take place with the full endorsement of the Security Council. We pray for peace and security for Iraq and hope that sovereignty will be restored to its people as soon as possible.

Samoa is most seriously concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction — chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. The determination of some countries to try to bring such weapons into existence — particularly nuclear weapons — is cause for alarm and constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. The internationally agreed instruments to control the manufacturing, transportation and deployment of weapons of mass destruction must be strengthened and implemented. Above all, States parties must adhere and honour their obligations to these treaties. Samoa joins the call for the effective disarmament and total elimination of weapons of mass destruction.

We are appalled at the continuing suffering of families and communities in all parts of the world, especially in the Middle East and Africa. We can only hope that the work to bring about stability in these areas will succeed and that communities will finally be able to live in peace.

As part of its support for United Nations efforts to ensure peace and security, Samoa is contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste. Together with members of the Pacific Islands Forum, and under the leadership of Australia and New Zealand, Samoa is also contributing to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, which is helping that country to restore law and order and assisting in its economic recovery. That regional initiative was endorsed at the Forum leaders' meeting last month. Its implementation conforms to regional responsibilities under the Charter, and recognizes the sovereignty of the Solomon Islands.

Samoa warmly welcomes the full institutionalization of the International Criminal Court and the election of its judges and officers. The Court is a major achievement in upholding international humanitarian standards and the protection of human rights. In order to ensure that it fully achieves its purpose, however, every effort must be made to ensure its impartiality in bringing to justice those who commit genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Court therefore deserves to be fully supported so as to endow it with the strength of universality and the rule of law. We look forward to its service to humanity.

Samoa reaffirms its commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and targets pledged three years ago in this very Hall. While much has been done, it is clear from the Secretary-General's report that more work remains to be carried out. The goals of halving poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, providing universal primary education and reducing environmental degradation — all by 2015 — can still be achieved in the 12 years that remain. In order for that to happen, States must improve on the political momentum of the past three years and make good on their promises.

Samoa recently hosted the Pacific regional meeting as part of the preparatory work for the International Meeting that will be held next year in Mauritius to review the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. This ongoing preparatory work in small island States is critical to a comprehensive review.

The International Meeting next year will be a unique opportunity for the international community to assess progress to date and to focus attention on areas where the expected results did not materialize. More importantly, it should identify remedial strategies and the required resources to assist small island developing States achieve sustainable development.

While we accept the primary responsibility for achieving the goals of the Programme of Action, the reality is that the support of the international community is indispensable to success. We therefore urge the fullest support by development partners in the review process and the implementation of the outcomes of the Mauritius International Meeting.

Looking to 2004 and the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, we believe that the agenda for the twelfth session is extremely important. The Commission's work will incorporate preparations for the International Meeting, but — very importantly — it will also focus on the key issues of water and sanitation. The significance of these issues for basic needs and healthy communities cannot be overemphasized.

We note with concern the collapse of negotiations at the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference in Cancún earlier this month. Certainly from the perspective of a small island developing country like my own, trade is both a vital and unavoidable component of sustainable development. We therefore continue to urge that the vulnerabilities of small States be taken fully into account in the negotiations, particularly with regard to special and differential treatment, implementation issues, services, agriculture and non-agricultural market access.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his steadfast and astute leadership, particularly during the dramatic events that have tested the Organization in recent years.

Finally, the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly has a heavy and difficult agenda, and the President has the full support of Samoa in the discharge of his important duties.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Independent State of Samoa, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to express congratulations and best wishes to Mr. Julian Hunte on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, and to express my confidence in his ability to ensure a productive and successful session as a representative of his friendly country, Saint Lucia. It is also my pleasure to express appreciation for the efforts of Mr. Jan Kavan, former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, in presiding over the fifty-seventh session and for the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in reaffirming the contributions and the role of the United Nations in addressing regional and international issues to fulfil the will of the international community, particularly by carrying out its principal responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the world.

Today, the United Nations is nearing the end of the sixth decade since its establishment after the Second World War as part of a world order accepted by all humanity to avoid the catastrophic consequences of war. Also today, the world is witnessing unprecedented threats, conflicts and crises, and it faces challenges that threaten the noble purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the Organization, a body to which the world's peoples look to avoid the perils of war, to free themselves from the fear of force and oppression, and to seek justice, prosperity and stability.

Since its inception, the United Nations has carried out the responsibilities set out in its Charter in a wide range of fields that are relevant both to people's daily lives and to the international community. Those responsibilities have included peacekeeping operations, development programmes, conferences on the environment, enhancing and expanding the role of women, protecting human rights, the resettlement of refugees, combating disease and epidemics, dealing with national disasters, spreading a culture of peace, and reaffirming international legality and the rule of law. However, those great achievements in people's lives and in Member States of the Organization will count for nothing in the face of regional conflicts, civil wars and ethnic strife in many parts of the world.

Many resolutions crucial to the maintenance of peace and stability continue to be ignored and therefore fail to serve the will of the international community. Therefore, all of us — leaders, peoples and Governments — have the moral responsibility to reactivate and implement those resolutions. We must reflect on the reasons that they have not been implemented; we must objectively consider why that has taken place; and we must study the Organization's successes and failures in that regard. In order to overcome these shortcomings in the current world order, we must muster the necessary political will and mobilize the efforts of the States and peoples that the Organization has comprised since its inception. Only thus will we be able to bridge the chasm between hopes and realities and to correct the misalignment between texts and ambitions and between resolutions and their implementation.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, has reaffirmed its strong belief in upholding the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and its confidence in the Organization's ability to shoulder its historic and legal responsibilities to build and maintain peace and to strengthen the foundations of peace.

Bahrain's leading regional and international role in comprehensive human development — both economic and political — has over the years been consistently supported by United Nations statistics and reports. The latest of those reports — the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 8 July 2003 — demonstrates that fact. At the political level, Bahrain has moved quickly forward with the consolidation of constitutional democracy and the rule of law after the overwhelming popular approval of the National Action Charter, promulgating its Constitution of February 2002 and establishing the two Chambers of the National Assembly in October of that year. At the level of civil society and human rights and in order to increase the pace of reform and development, Bahrain took significant steps to enhance constitutional guarantees of civil and political freedoms and rights through a royal decree establishing the Constitutional Court in 2002 and through the Workers Trade Union law of the same year.

Reaffirming their status and role in society, women in Bahrain are constitutionally entitled to vote and to run as candidates in elections, and to hold important positions in both the public and private sectors. In addition to that, women participate in the

broad social activities of the Supreme Council for Women, part of a coordinated and integrated system of development efforts that include mother and child care, achieving equality between men and women in a society that believes in the unity of the family, values gender equality and respects the rights of the family.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, a regional centre for trade, with well-established social and economic foundations based on a historic tradition of openness, is today a hub for trade in goods and capital, in a legislative and social environment in which Bahrainis, non-Bahrainis and visitors alike enjoy the stability required for investment and the movement of capital. These laws guarantee that the country remain an attractive and successful location for residence and movement for individuals and investors. Bahrain is also a fine example of successful economic liberalization, which has made it an attractive point in the Gulf area for regional projects and investment.

Achieving economic integration and regional cooperation between the Gulf and Middle East regions and other major and free trading blocs depends upon the strong foundation of a political and strategic environment conducive to achieving peace and cooperation.

In that context, the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East can be brought about only through a recognition of the inalienable legal rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State, a return of sovereignty over territory occupied since 1967 and control over their economic resources, in accordance with resolutions of international legality and the principles and aims of Middle East initiatives, and on the basis of agreements between the two sides, which must be fully respected and implemented.

The road map, which has gained consensus among the international community, supports the establishment of an independent Palestinian State living in peace and security, side by side with Israel, as envisaged by United States President George W. Bush in his peace initiative of June 2002, as reaffirmed by the international Quartet comprising United Nations, the United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation, and as agreed upon by the Palestinian Authority. This provides a unique, historic opportunity to achieve a balanced settlement that will restore the legitimate rights of the people and achieve a delicate balance between the obligations of the parties and their rights to security and peace.

The recent Israeli decision to remove in principle Chairman Yasser Arafat, the elected Palestinian President, and its threats to eliminate him, are very dangerous matters that contravenes the principles of democracy and the rules of international law. This was reaffirmed by the adoption of resolution 10/12 at the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on 19 September 2003.

Bahrain, which expresses its concern at this dangerous Israeli decision, calls upon the Quartet and the international community to pressure Israel to prevent the implementation of this decision, whose repercussions would weaken current peace opportunities.

Peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive; it requires the full implementation of resolutions of international legality, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Golan Heights, and Security Council resolution 425 (1978), regarding the Lebanese territories remaining under occupation. The Middle East today faces great challenges as well as unique opportunities and crucial moments that will determine the future of the region for generations to come.

This peace must be a single and indivisible unit. That applies both to the Middle East and to the Gulf region. It is a fundamental and vital request by Bahrain and the Arab world that steps be taken by the international community, the United Nations and influential parties, in particular the United States, to normalize political, economic and civilian life in Iraq, so that the country can regain its Arab, regional and international role.

In order for the Iraqis to determine their destiny, within a constitutional framework that provides for the rule of law and guarantees political freedom, peace and security for all Iraq's citizens and ethnic groups — a vital legal requirement — the Iraqis themselves must be allowed to rebuild economic, political and social foundations, as well as civil society, within an Iraqi national Government.

The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that the formation of a new national Government in Iraq is an important step for the brotherly Iraqi people towards

taking over their own affairs for a better life and for an increased regional and international role.

With regard to the Islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Moussa, which belong to the brotherly United Arab Emirates, we hope that the current important dialogue between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran will lead to a peaceful settlement of this issue and contribute to security and stability in the Gulf region.

The international commitment to fighting terrorism, political violence and extremism has become both an international and a national responsibility, particularly since the events of 11 September 2001, which claimed the lives of many innocent people.

Combating terrorism has become an international obligation, in keeping with the United Nations commitment to respect human rights, foremost of which are the rights to life and security.

Accordingly, the Kingdom of Bahrain has backed all international and regional efforts to combat this dangerous scourge, which threatens us all and whose effects can be felt around the world. Most recently, we have witnessed the evil attack on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, in which Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and a number of other innocent people lost their lives while serving the cause of international legality.

In that regard, Bahrain condemns the vicious orchestrated campaign waged against a sister State, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, by some Western media. We wish to commend Saudi Arabia for its tangible and important contribution to the global campaign against terrorism, to which it itself was exposed. Bahrain fully supports and endorses all the measures taken by Saudi Arabia in its attempts to eliminate terrorism and to consolidate regional security and stability.

The challenges of today's world order, represented by the United Nations, are greater than any particular region or State, and encompass all areas of life and society: the economy, education, health, technology and information, particularly following the information and communications technology revolution, in the context of the comprehensive globalization of thought, trade, politics, war and peace.

Today, it is neither possible nor acceptable, within the globalization of international relations at various levels, for one region to have full prosperity and abundance while others suffer from poverty and want, drought and desertification, and from incurable diseases which science and medicines cannot yet tackle and to which countries and Governments are unable to effectively respond or provide medicine or care for millions of victims.

Against the backdrop of globalization, the international community cannot ignore these trends. The summits, conferences and United Nations special sessions that have been held over the years to deal with issues such as human rights, the environment, development, women's rights, habitat, motherhood, children, culture and civilization reflect the degree to which those issues are connected to humanitarian, cultural, social and peace and security issues. Bahrain's active role and contributions and effective participation in summits and General Assembly special sessions, and its involvement in the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations in particular, clearly show that Bahrain's national policies and programmes dovetail with the priorities of the international community. An example of that was Bahrain's hosting of high-level dialogues among religions and cultures in autumn 2002. In the same vein, the Kingdom of Bahrain hosted a meeting on Islamic-Christian dialogue in October 2002, at which a number of valuable recommendations were put forward that we hope will contribute to efforts made in this area. Bahrain also recently hosted an Islamic forum, in which a number of Islamic scholars and clerics took part, to promote harmony among various Islamic schools of thought. Bahrain will continue to play the role of a haven for brotherhood and dialogue and a meeting place where various religions and cultures live side by side in peace.

The Kingdom of Bahrain believes on the basis of conscientious and free national will that the world today urgently needs a strong and revitalized United Nations, as was the case in the wake of the Second World War, to maintain international peace and security and effectively contribute to enhancing the dignity and welfare of humanity. In its quest for peace, the Kingdom of Bahrain is pursuing national policies of development and democracy to raise hope for a better future that will free the individual from fear and despair, oppression, famine, poverty and ignorance, provide him with a dignified life and protect him from natural disasters. Our national and international policies are closely inspired by the work of the United Nations, particularly in the development, social, economic and

humanitarian fields. Those policies are based on constitutional legality, democracy, transparency and good governance and guarantee the respect of individual rights and freedoms. Bahrain aspires to peace and security within the country, the region and the world as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yemen, His Excellency Mr. Abubakr A. Al-Qirbi.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly, which demonstrates the trust that this body has in him. We know that his skill and capabilities will ensure the success of our work, and we have every confidence that he will be participating in strengthening the role of the United Nations at a time when the international community is undergoing profound change. I would also like to welcome the laudable efforts made by the outgoing President of the General Assembly. I would like to stress that the delegation of my country, one of the Vice Presidents at this session, will provide the President with every kind of support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, our sincere gratitude and appreciation for his tireless efforts to successfully carry out the huge mission and responsibilities entrusted to the Organization.

At a time when we are witnessing a myriad of changes and surprising events, we would also like to express our sorrow at the horrendous and unjust attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, an attack that we consider to be aimed at the fundamental principles and values that the United Nations is championing.

We meet here full of hope and in response to the aspirations and concerns raised by numerous important issues before us for consideration during the present session. We must meet the difficult challenges and perils that confront us. We are at a crossroads in a highly complex era, in which we cannot rest on our laurels. We must face the international tragic events and developments that are damaging to the credibility of the United Nations and its noble principles and values. We must do this collectively through multilateral institutions that will guarantee unified efforts and vision.

We have met here today, and we must frankly and objectively recall what took place during the last session of the General Assembly, in 2002. That session took place one year after the odious terrorist attacks on the United States. During our debate then, we were unanimous in condemning and combating world terrorism with a view to eradicating it.

We tried strenuously to avoid a war in Iraq. We welcomed the road map and prospects for a peaceful and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. One year later, here we are asking whether we can indeed say that we have accomplished what we sought or taken steps towards peace in the Middle East as we had wished. Now that the Iraqi regime is no longer in place, does Iraq in fact enjoy a democratic and free system and a constitutional order, which we so ardently desire or have we in reality made Iraq a stage for violence and a hotbed of terrorism?

When my country opposed the war against Iraq, it was convinced that the United Nations was in a position to locate and eliminate weapons of mass destruction there and that the regime could be made to comply with the relevant resolutions based on international law.

My Government believed that this war would not achieve its aims, not only because it was based on shaky foundations but also because it was difficult to predict its negative consequences. We note with regret that it has led to increased extremism and terrorism.

On the other hand, regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, my country has developed a position based on the principles laid down by the Quartet: working for the advent of a Palestinian State that would exercise full sovereignty over its territory, with Jerusalem as its capital; withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab territories occupied since 5 June 1967, and the return of the refugees. We were and are still convinced that a settlement can only be achieved if Israel ceases its delaying tactics and complies with United Nations resolutions. We are convinced that Israel would only accept a solution if it were imposed on it by a binding resolution. This has not yet come to pass.

The world remains silent in the face of ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinians. The Security Council is paralysed, unable to adopt a resolution because the United States did not use its influence, despite its positive approach, as represented in the road map, to achieve the desired solution. Therefore we wonder if we can still say that everything is fine with the world and that peace and security are within our

grasp when the Middle East, East and West Africa, and East and South-East Asia have been battered by crises and conflicts?

If we tried to analyse these crises and their ramifications, we would find three major causes: first, a lack of democracy and freedoms; secondly, poverty and ignorance; and thirdly, a global order in which policies of hegemony dominate and practices of pressure are exerted against Third World States.

Will we be able at the United Nations to alleviate these desperate situations? Is it sufficient to proclaim democracy, devotion to freedom and human rights as a panacea for all problems? Can these ideals eradicate poverty and eliminate all that is negative in the realities of each country and in international relations? In fact, to alleviate these problems in an effective manner, we must take into consideration the three causes I have just mentioned. Therefore, the rich and the powerful must heed the cries of the weak and the poor.

A real partnership and war against injustice are guarantees of international peace and security and the best way to prevent extremism and terrorism. If things remain as they are now, we will witness a revolution of the poor, a rebellion of the oppressed, a scenario that is quite removed from the one on the clash of civilizations, as advanced by some parties.

My country believes that we need to seriously and positively cope with these crises and conflicts. The Middle East must no longer be a hotbed of tension and crises. The following measures are necessary: first, there must be an immediate halt to the occupation of Iraq, and its sovereignty, territorial integrity and resources must be preserved. The United Nations must assume responsibility for rebuilding Iraq; a national Government must be formed with a national constitution and a democratic regime; the Iraqis must be able to enjoy full rights and freedoms, and the League of Arab States must make a contribution to such efforts within international legality. We fully support the endeavours undertaken by the Governing Council in Iraq.

Secondly, the Security Council must shoulder its full responsibilities by implementing resolutions relevant to the Arab-Israeli conflict and by implementing the road map, without any amendments by the Israelis. Tel Aviv must be prevented from carrying out the negative and pernicious act of killing or expelling Yasser Arafat, the elected President of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian National Authority. Thirdly, Israel must withdraw from Syrian and Lebanese occupied territory, for that is an integral part of any attempt to have a just peace in the Middle East.

We would like to recall that the Arab countries, in accordance with the Arab initiative for peace, had accepted Israel as a State in the region and had agreed to deal with it on the basis of its real interest in peace and in ending the occupation of the Arab territories.

We would also like to recall that my country subscribes to the efforts made by the United Nations regarding measures resulting from the Conference on Disarmament, which will allow us to adopt an international treaty putting an end to the arms race. There is a need to encourage confidence-building measures on the national and regional level. The Middle East must be a region free from weapons of mass destruction. Israeli nuclear installations must be submitted to international inspection. We must reject the policies of selectivity and double standards for this issue and many others.

The policy of embargo and unilateral economic sanctions that go beyond regional borders and are imposed on certain countries are flagrant violations of international law. My country subscribes to the United Nations appeal to put an end to unilateral measures imposed on the Sudan and Cuba, now that these measures have been eliminated regarding Libya. This will allow us to spread a culture of peace, dialogue and understanding, even in dealing with questions on which there has been disagreement. This would be a reasonable means and a rational approach to settle conflicts and differences among countries.

My country believes that this is also the approach and the means that must be adopted and implemented to settle the conflict in Somalia, in order to preserve the national interests of that country. The Republic of Yemen was one of the first countries to participate in efforts designed to achieve national reconciliation in Somalia. Therefore, my country urges the United Nations and the international community to play their role to ensure peace and security in Somalia.

Yemen would also like to express its support for the peace negotiations between the Sudanese Government and the various opposition factions, which would finally lead to peace, security and stability in the brotherly country of the Sudan and would safeguard its people and territorial integrity.

The phenomenon of international terrorism is not unique to a single colour, religion or doctrine. It is an obstacle to world peace, security and progress. Various international coordination efforts to contain this phenomenon have failed because of lack of vision and faulty approaches. The Republic of Yemen has greatly suffered from terrorism. It has tried to take all possible measures to cope with this ill. We hope that there will be united efforts by the international community to eradicate this scourge and to finalize a comprehensive convention against international terrorism.

Yemen renews its appeal for holding an international conference under the aegis of the United Nations to define the causes of this phenomenon and to finalize a strategy that contains solutions to the origins of this destructive phenomenon. My country also believes that the efforts of the international community must be focused on putting an end to any and all political pressure exerted on certain countries and on opposing any attempt at threats or use of force and interference — using terrorism as its excuse — in the internal affairs of various countries. The Republic of Yemen joins many countries in calling for the need to differentiate between terrorism as a phenomenon and national struggle against foreign occupation by all means, as is the case with the legitimate and just struggle of the Palestinian people.

The developing countries are faced today with development challenges that can be overcome only through concerted international efforts and support which would help effect political and economic reforms. There is a need for rich countries to grant development and financial assistance to poor countries in order to ease the debt burden of the latter and to facilitate the use and transfer of technology. Heads of State and Government who met during the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000 committed themselves to achieving this goal.

The United Nations, together with the International Monetary Fund and other institutions, must try to establish an international fund for the eradication of poverty and to improve the situation of refugees. There is also a need to relieve economic, social and security problems, from which countries such as Yemen suffer due to the many refugees on its soil, especially those from Africa.

The Acting President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: Last century bore witness to two terrible world wars, in which over 80 million human beings perished. It later seemed that, due to the lessons learned, the United Nations Organization was born so that war would never again occur. The Charter, adopted in San Francisco nearly 60 years ago, proclaimed the purpose of saving "succeeding generations from the scourge of war". However, after that we suffered wars of aggression and conquest, colonial wars, border wars and ethnic wars. Many peoples were left with no other choice but war to defend their rights. Moreover, in the last 13 years the scourge of war has taken another 6 million lives.

Sixty years ago, the world order proclaimed in the United Nations Charter was sustained through the military balance of two super-Powers. A bipolar world was born, which generated clashes, divisions, the cold war and almost a devastating nuclear war. It was not the ideal world, far from it. But since one of those super-Powers has disappeared, the current world is worse and more dangerous.

The President took the Chair.

Now world order cannot be held together in the spheres of influence of two similar super-Powers or by mutual deterrence. What should it be founded on, then? On the honest and generous recognition by the only super-Power that, far from disturbing it, should contribute to the creation of a peaceful world, with the right to justice and development for all.

Does the war in Iraq contribute to that objective? No, it does not. Its outcome is just the opposite of the ideal of preserving peace, strengthening the role of the United Nations and enhancing multilateralism and international cooperation. Unfortunately, the truth is that those most able to prevent and remove threats to peace are the ones causing war today.

Should the Government of the United States recognize this truth that almost everyone in this Hall shares? Yes. What humiliation or harm would there be to the prestige of this great nation? None. The world would recognize that a remedy benefiting all had come about, after the unleashing of a war supported by just a few, either by shortsightedness or by meanness of interests; after it was proven that the pretexts brandished were not true; and after observing the reaction of a people who, as every invaded and occupied people will do, have begun to fight and will continue to fight for respect for their right to self-determination.

Therefore, must the occupation in Iraq cease? Yes, and the sooner the better. It is a source of new and more serious problems, not of solutions. Must the Iraqis be left alone to freely establish their own Government and institutions and make decisions on their natural resources? Yes. It is their right, and they will not stop fighting for it.

Must the Security Council be pressured into adopting decisions that would further undermine it ethically and morally? No. That would eliminate the last possibility to profoundly reform, expand and democratize the Council. The future of the United Nations will be determined today in the outcome of the international crisis generated by the war in Iraq.

The most critical danger stalking us today is the persistence of a world where what prevails is the law of the jungle, the might of the most powerful, the privileges and extravagance of a handful of countries, and the dangers of aggression, underdevelopment and hopelessness for the vast majority.

Will a worldwide dictatorship be imposed on our peoples, or will the United Nations and multilateralism be preserved? That is the question. We all agree, I believe, that the role of the United Nations is irrelevant today, or at least is on its way to being so. But some of us say so with concern and would like to strengthen the Organization. Others say so with covert satisfaction and encourage the hope of imposing their designs on the world.

We must speak frankly. What role does the General Assembly play today? In truth, almost none. It is merely a debating forum without any true influence or practical role whatsoever.

Are international relations governed by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter? No. Why now, when philosophy, the arts and science are reaching unprecedented levels, is the superiority of some peoples over others once again proclaimed? And why are other peoples, who should be treated as brothers and sisters, referred to as living in the dark corners of the planet or on the Euro-Atlantic periphery of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization? Why do some among us feel entitled to launch a unilateral war, given the fact that in the Charter we proclaimed that military force would only be used to serve the common interest and that collective measures should be taken to preserve peace? Why is there no longer any talk about using peaceful means to settle disputes? Can we believe that everyone is fostering friendship among our nations on the basis of respect for the principle of equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples? Why then has my people had to suffer, and continue to suffer, from over four decades of aggression and economic blockade?

The principle of the sovereign equality for all States was established when the Charter was adopted. Are we in fact equal? Do all Member States enjoy similar rights? According to the Charter we do, but according to stark reality we do not. Respect for the principle of the sovereign equality of States, which should be the cornerstone of contemporary international relations, will only be established if the most powerful countries accept in real terms that they must respect the rights of others, even if those other countries lack the military might and the economic power to defend those rights. Are the mightiest and most developed countries ready to respect the rights of others, even if doing so might perhaps slightly restrain the privileges they enjoy? I am afraid that they are not. Are the principles of the non-use or the threat of use force, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and respect for the territorial integrity and independence of States actually in force? According to the language and the spirit of the Charter, they are. But are they really?

It is true that a handful of developed countries has benefited from the current situation over the last few decades. But that time is coming to an end. Those countries are also beginning to become victims of the imperial policies of a single super-Power. Should they not take into account, with modesty and common sense, the need to work with the over 130 Third World countries that have been compelled to endure this unjust order and that are ready to attempt to persuade the most powerful country to put aside its arrogance and to comply with its duties as a founder of the United Nations?

Cuba believes that we should not, and cannot, relinquish multilateralism; that we should not, and cannot, relinquish the United Nations; and that we cannot, and should not, relinquish the struggle for a world of peace, justice, equality and development for all. Cuba therefore believes that we must achieve three immediate objectives.

First and foremost, we must put an end to the occupation of Iraq, hand over real control to the United Nations immediately and begin the recovery process to re-establish Iraq's sovereignty and put in place a

legitimate Government decided upon by the Iraqi people. In addition, the scandalous distribution of Iraq's wealth must cease immediately. That will be beneficial for the United States, whose young people are dying in Iraq while waging an unjust and inglorious war. It will be beneficial for Iraq, whose people will be able to turn over a new page in their history. It will be beneficial for the United Nations, which has also been a victim of that war. And it will be beneficial for all of our countries, which have had to suffer international economic recession and an increase insecurity that is threatening us all.

Secondly, we must address without delay the issue of truly reforming the United Nations and, above all, undertake a far-reaching democratization process. The current situation is already untenable, as evidenced, first of all, by the Security Council's shameful inability to prevent the war in Iraq and, secondly, by its demand on the Government of Israel to refrain from expelling or murdering the leader of the Palestinian people — a people who, in accordance with a decision the Council itself took over five decades ago, should long ago have had an independent State. That the Government of the United States has exercised its veto power on 26 occasions to protect the crimes of Israel is evidence of the fact that that unjust privilege must be abolished.

What is needed is a reform that goes back to the roots of the founding of the United Nations; that guarantees effective respect for the Charter; and that re-establishes the mechanisms of collective security and the rule of international law. Reform should also ensure the ability of the United Nations to preserve peace and to lead the fight for general and complete disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, to which many generations have aspired. Reform should also restore to the United Nations its prerogatives to fight for the socio-economic development and the basic rights of all the planet's inhabitants, including the rights to food and life. Doing so is more necessary than ever before, given that neo-liberalism has spectacularly failed and that a new opportunity now exists for establishing a new system of international economic relations. We need to rescue the role of the United Nations and to ensure that all States, large and small, respect the Charter. But we do not need a reform that is going to founder unceremoniously as part of a bureaucratic process of adapting what is left of the United Nations to the interests and whims of a few, rich and mighty countries.

Finally, we need to return to a discussion of the serious economic and social problems currently affecting the world. We have to make the battle for the right of nearly five billion people to development a priority. The Millennium Assembly committed us to working for very modest and insufficient goals. But everything has now been forgotten, without even a discussion. Seventeen million children under the age of 5 will die this year, not as victims of terrorism but as victims of under-nourishment and preventable diseases. Will a realistic debate based on solidarity be held in this Hall to discuss how, in line with the Millennium Declaration, to halve by 2015 the number of people, currently over 1.2 billion in number, who are suffering from abject poverty, as well as the number who suffer from hunger, which is more than 800 million? Will there be any discussion about the nearly 900 million illiterate adults? Or will the Millennium Declaration also become a dead letter, as has been the case with the Kyoto Protocol and the decisions of 10 summits held at the level of head of State?

Developed countries will provide Third World countries with $53 billion in official development assistance this year. In return, those countries will charge recipients over $350 billion in foreign debt interest; and our foreign debt will have grown by the end of the year. Do creditors by any chance believe that that unjust situation will last forever? Should we, as debtors, resign ourselves to being poor forever? Is that picture of injustice and peril confronted by most countries what the founders of the United Nations really dreamed of? No. Like us, the founders also dreamed that a better world was possible.

Those are the questions that, with all due respect, we would like some in the Hall to answer for us. I am not talking about Cuba, which, condemned to die for wanting to be free, has had to fight on its own, not only thinking about itself but also about all the peoples of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. George A. Papandreou, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. You are assuming your duties at a difficult juncture in

international affairs. I am sure that, under your guidance, the Assembly will make a positive contribution to fostering peace and progress in the world. Allow me also to extend my warmest thanks to your predecessor, our good friend Mr. Jan Kavan, for his commitment and diligence.

We fully subscribe to the statement delivered by Mr. Frattini on behalf of the European Union, as well as to the priorities of the European Union that he has laid out before the Assembly.

When I held the presidency of the European Union, just a few months ago, I had the honour to work closely with the Secretary-General at a very crucial time. Secretary-General Kofi Annan often has to wage an uphill battle in his efforts to safeguard the moral authority of the United Nations and to carry out its mandate. His tireless efforts to promote peace and security worldwide deserve our fullest support.

Indeed, this year the United Nations has undergone one of the most testing periods in its history. During the Iraqi crisis the world's citizens put great faith in the power of the United Nations to respond to the potential threat of weapons of mass destruction, while at the same time preserving peace and the legitimacy of international law. The leaders of the international community failed to unite around global public opinion, and a war ensued. As Kofi Annan told the Assembly, a new doctrine of pre-emptive force and unilateralist actions has called into question our long tradition of global consensus on collective security.

Paradoxically, despite that crisis, our citizens expect more today from the United Nations, rather than less. Whether we are dealing with poverty, inequality, human rights violations, terrorism, pollution or weapons of mass destruction, the world looks to us for leadership. We are expected to transform today's insecurity into tomorrow's opportunities. That may seem like a tall order, but it is possible. It is possible today, as we are witnessing a growing consciousness about the need to think seriously about global governance. That consciousness has to do with the magnitude and complexity of the issues with which humankind is grappling. It also has to do with the fact that, in an era of globalization, a problem in another corner of the world can have major effects in our own neighbourhood of the global village.

The legitimacy of the United Nations is at the heart of that debate. If we are to convince the more powerful of the world that unilateralism does not pay, we need to show that multilateralism is effective. We need to prove that organizations such as ours can deal effectively with threats to our peace and security. We need to rethink our institutions, which must be financially and politically viable. We must ensure that our institutions derive their legitimacy not only from the action we take and the just decisions we make, but from the fact that they are truly democratic and that they are representative of global consensus as far as possible.

All that is possible, but it requires courageous changes — certainly the courage to open up a sincere dialogue between citizens, countries, continents and civilizations. We therefore fully endorse the Secretary-General's proposal for the reform of the United Nations. By the time the Assembly meets next year, we need to have achieved realistic targets and tangible results, and to have re-evaluated the role of the various bodies of the United Nations and of their respective missions. The role of the Security Council is paramount, and its composition must be more representative in order to ensure full trust in its authority and legitimacy. The United Nations can become central in safeguarding humankind's security, peace and prosperity. Greece will work towards that goal if the General Assembly honours us by electing us to the Security Council for the 2005-2006 term.

From the corner of the world I come from, I can seriously state that the prospect for peace is real. In the last century Greece lived through two World Wars, two Balkan wars, a major war with Turkey, a famine, a civil war, numerous dictatorships and confrontation with Turkey over Cyprus. We also became a major recipient of refugees from the crises, ethnic cleansing and wars in our region of South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Today there is hope in the Balkans that peace can become permanent, that democracy can flourish and that human beings can live together in dignity, irrespective of their religious, political or ethnic affiliation. Greece and Turkey have emerged from a long period of over 40 years of tension and suspicion when there was little contact and no bilateral agreements were ever signed. Twice in recent decades we went to the brink of war. Today I can stand before the Assembly and state that Greece and Turkey have ratified 14 agreements in areas ranging from tourism to agriculture and education to security. We have also agreed on 10 confidence-building measures and, although fundamental differences remain on specific

issues, we are now working cooperatively to try to deal with some of the most contentious and controversial questions that have divided us for decades.

Further testimony of that improvement is the fact that, with my Turkish counterpart, Abdullah Gül, we simultaneously submitted yesterday in this building our ratification instruments for the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines. In Cyprus, an island divided after Turkey's invasion and occupation in 1974, we perceive the common desire to build a democratic, united Cyprus where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots can live together in peace. Last April, following the lifting of restrictions on free movement, thousands of Cypriots seized the opportunity to cross the so-called Green Line to meet with one another and to demonstrate that it is possible for them to share a common future.

However, that easing of restrictions is not a substitute for a comprehensive settlement to the island's political problem. Over the years, Greece has actively supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to achieve a comprehensive settlement in conformity with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the principles on which the European Union is founded, namely, the Acquis Communautaire. Those resolutions must be implemented. We will not give up hope until all Cypriots can live together in harmony and security in a federal State with a single citizenship and without foreign troops on its territory. On 1 May 2004, Cyprus will be a full member of the European Union. We hold out the hope that the Annan plan will be used as a basis for negotiating, and that a solution will be found, so that the Turkish Cypriot population will also enjoy the security and prosperity that accession to the European Union will bring. It is possible.

Yet all those sustained efforts for peace in the region would not have been possible if it were not for the creation of a viable, stable and sustainable framework of shared values, principles, visions and interests, as well as a deep commitment to respect of our citizen's rights and including a vision in which, as Pericles said in his *Funeral Oration*, one is free of suspicion of the other. That framework, vision and common values can be summed up in one phrase: our European Union.

Fifty years ago, Europe was shattered by two world wars and countless regional conflicts. Through our common values of respect for the rule of law, democracy, freedom, and solidarity, we have overcome wars and the Holocaust and have seen the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today the European Union is a model of multilateralism, a system of collective governance that advances the shared interests and addresses the common problems of a coalition of nation-States that all aspire to peace and security in a common union. Europe may not have a magic wand that can solve all crises, but we have proved that it is possible to build a stable and democratic continent. It is that prospect that now unites us in the Balkans, gives hope to Greek-Turkish relations and creates a common vision for Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The United Nations can learn from our experience as it prepares to undertake necessary reforms. What the European Union has provided is not a magic wand. We have simply said that matters of war and peace are so important for humankind that they cannot merely be left up to leaders, no matter how great they may be. They cannot be left up to negotiators, no matter how skilful they may be. They cannot be left up to earthquakes, apocalypses or inspirations, however momentous they may be. What is needed is a stable, sustainable, secure environment of common values, international law, accepted practice and purpose. It is within that secure environment that we can work out roadmaps, benchmarks, milestones, target dates and goals that can become both credible and powerful tools for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the establishment of lasting institutions of stability and conviviality.

That is why the United Nations has become so important for Iraq and its people. That is why the United Nations and the Quartet are so important for the implementation of the road map to solve the Palestinian conflict and the wider Middle East conflict. If we differed in Europe on the means of dealing with Iraq, we remain united in our conviction that the United Nations has a vital role to play in the reconstruction and stabilization process. Indeed, I would argue that the current predicament in Iraq is a stark reminder that multilateral cooperation is an imperative for world peace and security. It will only be possible to bring lasting peace to Iraq if we all work together.

In referring to the importance of the role of the United Nations in Iraq we are simply stating the obvious need to create a stable international environment within which solutions can be nurtured, and where they can mature, in order to stabilize the region. It is within that context that it must be possible to realize a Palestinian State by 2005, a State that lives

side by side with a secure Israel. It is also within that context that during our presidency of the European Union we placed great emphasis on engaging in a meaningful dialogue of cultures that could hopefully heal the deepening rifts with regard to how different cultures view our changing world. We also devoted considerable efforts during Greece's presidency to strengthening Europe's relations with the Arab world. We hope that that dialogue can continue to be an investment in, and an instrument for, furthering peace, democracy and prosperity.

Iraq challenged Europe to think globally. We realized that in order to safeguard our citizens' security we had to develop stronger foreign and defence policies. We took the initiative during our presidency to launch the first European security strategy. We are now creating more clearly defined defence policies and greater military and crisis-management capabilities. Last June, the European Union adopted its first strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as a joint-action plan on terrorism. That was quickly followed by a framework agreement on weapons of mass destruction between the European Union and the United States.

Similarly, problems such as terrorism, trafficking in drugs, arms and people, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction all point to a world where conflict is not confined to national frontiers. It is only logical to conclude that most problems can only be properly addressed through multilateral action and policies in our global village. Sustainable development will bring about sustainable peace. But sustainable peace also depends on the freedom of our citizens: freedom of choice, freedom to participate, freedom from oppression and freedom from fear and discrimination.

Democracy bodes well for security, because security cannot be achieved without the legitimacy of our institutions and decisions. But democracy cannot be imposed, it must be nurtured. That is the difficult task ahead, namely, to create democratic processes in a trans-national way. That is becoming a global challenge that we cannot afford to ignore. It must be possible, otherwise we will always be prey to extremist forces that resort to violence, often exploiting the sense of exclusion among our citizens, many of whom feel excluded from prosperity and human rights.

This year, such forces were responsible for the untimely deaths of three champions of democracy. Allow me to mention their names: Zoran Djindjić, Sergio Vieira de Mello and Anna Lindh. Their tragic deaths pose a critical challenge to the very freedom and democracy they fought so hard to defend. We must not allow the threat of violence, intolerance and fear to hold our democratic societies hostage. We must not let insecurity blind us to the simple truth that democracy holds the key to a world without violence.

In our global village today, our challenge is to see to it that we have an international system that truly governs democratically. We must ask ourselves tough questions. How representative and accountable are our international institutions? Who decides on global rules and regulations? Who implements those decisions? Whose interests do they serve? Why do so many of our citizens feel moved to stage protests outside international summits? How can we address their grievances and include them in the decision-making process? If we can find satisfactory answers to these questions we will have come a long way towards replacing today's insecurity with tomorrow's opportunities.

Building on our long history of democracy, Greece is committed to supporting and developing new democratic practices. One way to do so is through the Internet, which has created radical new possibilities for reinvigorating and enriching democratic dialogue. We created an on-line experiment during our presidency of the European Union that is called e-Vote, an electronic pilot project through which citizens can participate in ongoing debates. Three months from now, we will assemble at Geneva for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. There Greece will host a special conference on the promise of electronic democracy. I invite the entire Assembly to attend.

Finally, in this global village we also need to have global festivals, even with our many difficulties, to celebrate humankind and our common values. The Olympic Games are one such festival. Greece will have the honour to host a great homecoming on the occasion of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

We have introduced in the General Assembly a new draft resolution on the subject of building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal. We want to encourage the notion that it is possible to create lasting peace from a pause in hostilities. The United Nations and, in particular, the Secretary-General have long championed the value of peaceful cooperation through sport. Since 1993, the

Assembly has unanimously adopted six resolutions calling for a truce during the Olympic Games. This draft resolution, like the ones before it, calls on all Member States to observe the Olympic Truce, the longest peace accord in ancient history. I urge the Assembly to support that draft resolution. Let us reaffirm our commitment to the spirit of peaceful cooperation upon which the Olympics were founded. Let us send a symbolic message from this international body of peace for a peaceful Olympics and, ultimately, for a more peaceful world. Let us prove that that too is possible.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Lieutenant-General Mompati S. Merafhe, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana.

Mr. Merafhe (Botswana): Allow me, first of all, to express once again to the Secretary-General and to all United Nations personnel the condolences of my Government and the people of Botswana for the terrorist attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August. We are outraged that an attack of that magnitude was carried out against international civil servants, whose sole mission in that country is to help Iraqis rebuild their country. The death of Special Representative Sergio Vieira de Mello and a number of his staff is indeed a loss to the United Nations family that we shall all feel for a long time to come.

May I now pay my respects to you, Mr. President, and congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I pledge to you the full support of my delegation. Let me also pay tribute to our illustrious Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his dynamic leadership of the Organization, in particular for his unshakeable commitment to the reform of the United Nations. I assure him of the unwavering support of Botswana in the discharge of his onerous responsibilities.

The fifty-eighth session is beginning at a time when we are faced with formidable challenges to the cohesion of the international community and to the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. We have just witnessed the war in Iraq, which caused deep divisions and recrimination among the Member States of the United Nations. It is important that the Member States set aside their differences and promote the Organization as a force that can rally nations, both big and small, around common causes. For the United Nations to succeed in its mission, it is important that all Member States respect the Charter.

Although now fewer in number, conflicts continue to bedevil the African continent. Fighting is still going on in many parts of Liberia, although there is a semblance of peace in the capital, Monrovia. It is a welcome development that the Security Council has decided to send a peacekeeping mission to that war-torn country. The peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, though holding, is still fragile. Only recently, a military coup took place in Guinea-Bissau. Botswana strongly condemns the coup, which further tarnishes the image of Africa. We welcome the news that, through the mediation of the Economic Community of West African States(ECOWAS) and the African Union, the military in Guinea-Bissau has agreed to hand over power to a civilian interim administration until elections are held, in two years' time.

Those conflicts continue to drain Africa's energies and to undermine the continent's capacity to focus on the equally challenging tasks of development and poverty eradication. The vicious cycle of war, poverty, hunger and disease has left African people in despair. They wonder whether in this new millennium the dawn of peace and tranquillity that they so aspire to will ever come. The inability of the international community thus far to act resolutely to address those conflicts will no doubt make it more difficult for the continent to implement its major programmes, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The conflict in the Middle East continues to be a matter of grave concern. All initiatives towards a peaceful settlement, including the road map promoted by the Quartet, have so far failed. The decision by Israel and others to insist on determining who in the leadership of the Palestinians they will do business with is an unacceptable precondition for genuine negotiations. Worse still, the threat to expel the democratically elected leader of the Palestinians, Mr. Arafat, is a recipe for further strife that could result in more loss of life on both sides. That development should be condemned by all who want to see peace in that land.

In Iraq, despite formal pronouncements that hostilities have ended, the country is still not at peace. Instead we see an escalation of violence, with many people, including coalition troops, being killed every day. The situation clearly calls for an intervention by the Security Council to ensure that the Iraqi people are

given the mandate to govern themselves and that the United Nations is given a bigger role to play in the reconstruction of the country.

Botswana firmly believes that the various challenges that the international community faces today can best be tackled under a multilateral framework. The United Nations remains the foremost body for promoting the Agenda for Peace. Small States such as my own place great hope in multilateral partnership and cooperation, for on their own or in their small regional groupings the challenges they face are formidable. We therefore call upon Member States to rededicate themselves to the noble ideals of the Organization.

As we direct our energies towards peace and security, we must also remain focused on the twin challenges of development and poverty eradication. Those are global challenges requiring global solutions and the active participation of all nations.

Our performance in efforts to eradicate poverty cannot be considered successful by any measure. Poverty still remains a blemish on humankind's attempts at socio-economic upliftment. The policies, strategies and programmes to address the situation have not had the desired effect. It is estimated that about 1.2 billion people around the world still live in poverty, and a large proportion of them live in Africa. It is unacceptable that in this day and age, when billions of dollars are spent on armaments, space technology and other advances in human endeavour, such a large number of people are still poor and marginalized.

We should bear in mind that there is a clearly established link between poverty, on the one hand, and the political instability and insecurity that the world is witnessing today, on the other. Poverty breeds resentment, anger and despair. People condemned to the margins of society feel that they have nothing to gain by participating in the democratic process of governance. Instead they believe that they have nothing to lose by using violent means in expressing their grievances, for in their perception, the international community is indifferent to their suffering.

Three years after the Millennium Declaration was adopted by our heads of State, the General Assembly should take full stock of the progress achieved towards the fulfilment of the commitments contained in it. Botswana welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. It is the intention of my delegation to participate actively in the debate on this matter.

We need to measure in concrete terms whether there has been an increase in the flow of official development assistance. We need to measure whether we have been able to mobilize enough domestic and international resources for development, including foreign direct investment and private capital flows. We need to measure whether we have resolved the external debt crisis. We need to measure how far we have gone towards establishing fair and equitable international monetary and trading systems. Above all, we need to measure how much we have achieved in the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In that context, it is regrettable that the recent talks in Cancún on trade, a key factor in poverty reduction and development, collapsed.

Earlier, I referred to the need for the international community to address the problem of poverty with all the resources at its disposal; for the failure to do so will only increase the level of frustration and anger and feelings of powerlessness among the poor, which will in turn will provide fertile ground for radicalism and extremism.

Botswana strongly condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorism, like poverty, is now the biggest threat to civilized norms of international discourse. The recent senseless and deliberate attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad is a stark reminder that even the United Nations servants of peace and humankind are not immune from acts of terror. We must support the appeal by the Secretary-General for the adoption of urgent measures to provide protection and security to United Nations staff wherever they serve. We believe that the United Nations must be empowered to play a pivotal role in mobilizing international consensus around measures to curb the scourge of terrorism. In that respect, Botswana remains ready to cooperate in any way possible with the relevant United Nations agencies.

My delegation was most pleased that a high-level meeting of the General Assembly was convened on 22 September this year to focus on sharing best practices and the lessons learned in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As one of the countries most affected by that scourge, my Government accords the highest priority to tackling HIV/AIDS. My delegation fully supports the conclusions reached by the high-

level interactive panel on the critical issues that must now be addressed, namely, political leadership; stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS; the importance of broad-based partnerships; and resource mobilization on a very large scale. We call upon our development partners, both in Government and in the private sector, to dig deeper into their pockets to support the efforts of developing countries struggling so hard to meet their obligations to control that scourge.

Turning to the Secretary-General's reform proposals, while progress has been made in respect of the rationalization of the functions of the Secretariat, especially in the economic and social fields, formidable hurdles still remain in connection with the reform of the Security Council. The Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council has, in our view, done all that is humanly possible to solicit a wide range of views and to try to bridge the differences that have emerged. But, regrettably, little progress has been made. It is clear to us that this matter, which is of vital importance to the whole Organization, will only move forward if there is political will on the part of some key Member States. This issue cannot continue to defy our collective wisdom after 10 years of deliberation. A compromise solution must emerge soon or history will judge us harshly.

We welcome what now seems to be an emerging consensus towards the revitalization of the General Assembly. The speeches delivered in the Assembly have been correctly observed by the Secretary-General in his report as being repetitive and sterile. The agenda tends to be too long, and often results in a duplication of issues. We share the proposal to keep the agenda short and focused, with a number of issues clustered. Long speeches should be replaced by more focused debates and interactive dialogue. We strongly believe that those modest reforms would make the deliberations of the General Assembly more interesting to our stakeholders. They would also enable issues of vital importance to be fully debated, and thus make it easier to implement the decisions reached.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Botswana's commitment to the United Nations and its agenda. To us the United Nations is the embodiment of our collective will to accomplish the Millennium Development Goals.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.